

Delaware Women's Commission
Office of Women's Advancement & Advocacy
State of Delaware, Department of Human Resources

Meeting Minutes

Date of meeting: Monday October 21, 2019

Present: *Marian Palley-Wilmington
Alisha Bryson-Wilmington
Melanie Ross Levin-Wilmington
Sobia Choudhri-Teleconference
Kim Lowman-Wilmington
Sherese Brewington-Carr
*Chairperson

Location: Haslet Building
122 Martin Luther King Blvd, South
Dover, DE 19901
(Via Videoconferencing)
Carvel State Office Building
820 N. French Street, 10th Floor
Wilmington, DE 19801

1. Welcome and Introductory Comments

The meeting was called to order by the Chairperson at 10:30am. The Chairperson welcomed everyone and asked the members. to review the minutes from the last meeting. Motion to approve minutes was approved with all in favor, none opposed.

2. Review of September 9, 2019 Nonprofit advocacy meeting of the Advocacy Coalition

The Chairperson discussed the advocacy training hosted by the Delaware Women's Coalition on September 9th. Eighteen organizations were represented at the meeting, including around half of the coalition members. Invited guests from the Morris James law firm in Delaware and the Alliance for Justice in Washington, DC spoke about how to effectively advocate and lobby as a 501 C (3). The training for lobbying and advocating for nonprofits groups is free and early educational groups were included in the training. OWAA will look into the possibility for a webinar option to ensure that more groups can be included in the training. People who could not attend the training in Wilmington can contact the Alliance for Justice and a recorded webinar can be provided. The Coalition may have to look into other venues with a central location for the training in order to include more folks from downstate.

3. Update on Last Legislative Session

The OWAA Director discussed the equal rights amendment bill that passed in January as well as a last-minute bill further clarifying that touching a person with semen is considered sexual contact. The OWAA Director asked members that if they see things going on in other states that could affect Delaware to please let her know and maybe she can bring it up in legislation. State Representative Melissa Minor Brown introduced a bill that would accommodate women in prison by creating prison nurseries, thereby not separating them from their newborn babies. Often mothers in prison are separated from their babies within 12 hours of giving birth and they do not get the chance to bond with their children. State Representative Melissa Minor Brown could be invited to the next Commission meeting to discuss more about this issue. Representative Valerie Longhurst will be introducing a bill to provide free tampons and sanitary napkins to female students in grades 6 to 12. A representative from the Junior League could be invited to a future meeting to talk about period equality.

OWAA must have permission from the Governor to work on certain bills as well as offer technical help to other agencies on bills. The Office of Women's Advancement & Advocacy, DAPI and the Department of Education are working together on a bill that would accommodate pregnant and parenting students who need time away from school by not penalizing them for having child-related appointments during the school day.

4. Discussion on Voices Project

OWAA is working with the National Association of Commissions for Women to participate in the Voices of Women in America Survey. The survey will be collected by the National Association of Commissions for Women and the results for Delaware will be shared with OWAA. Members discussed how to get survey out to women in Delaware as well as how the Delaware Women Workforce Council will also be working to spread the word about the survey. Members discussed starting with statewide employees and the OWAA reported that there are several channels to go through, but the process has been initiated. The Maryland Commission of Women was invited to come Delaware to offer guidance, but scheduling didn't permit it. This report coming from the National Association of Commissions for Women will take data collected from Delaware and incorporate it into a national report. OWAA will also create a report for Delaware that speaks to the status and unmet needs of Delaware women. This report will be sent to the legislators in Delaware in order to spur action on behalf of Delaware women. After the completion of the survey, OWAA is planning to hold listening sessions across the state to learn more about the needs of Delaware women. The Delaware Workforce Council will work with the Office of Women's Advancement & Advocacy to conduct listening sessions. The Delaware Women Workforce Council and the Delaware Women's Commission will work together to promote the Voices survey and to conduct the listening sessions. The survey promotion materials will be sent out on November 4th, 2019 to both the Commission and the Workforce Council.

5. Plans for the year

The OWAA Director discussed vacancies in the Commission as well as other groups that OWAA oversees and how she is working to fill them. . about the survey and the listening sessions. The Chair remarked that the focus for the year will be the Voices survey and listening sessions.

Meeting Adjourned at 12:15pm